

step 410 whether a timeout period (e.g., 60 seconds) has expired. If the timeout period has not expired, then hand-held electronic toy 100 will continue to wait for the user's selection of an activity. Conversely, if the timeout period has expired, hand-held electronic toy 100 will power off at step 412.

[1033] If it is determined at step 408 that one of activities 510, 520, 530, 540 has been selected from activity menu 500, then the selected activity is launched at step 414. In general, the particular activity that is selected may dictate that a particular tool set functionality is required. For example, some tools may be appropriate for a drawing activity, but not appropriate for a gaming activity. This calibration of tool functionality to the selected activity is accomplished at step 416, where hand-held electronic toy 100 sets the functionality of tools associated with icons 201-209.

[1034] As described above, the tools that are associated with icons 201-209 on toolbar menu 112 represent a significant point of interaction and familiarity for the user of hand-held electronic toy 100. These tools represent the user's knowledge base that governs the interaction with the activities that are run on hand-held electronic toy 100.

[1035] Significantly, the various activities that are capable of being run on hand-held electronic toy 100 cover a wide-range of creativity and learning exercises. As noted, in one embodiment, the base system software can include a free-drawing activity, a scene-starter activity, a funny-faces activity, and a connect-the-dots activity. As would be appreciated, various other activities can be provided using expansion cartridges 130. For example, expansion cartridges 130 can be provided that enable game activities (e.g., BINGO, Tic-Tac-

Toe, Concentration, Mazes), animal-discovery activities, learning activities (e.g., letters and numbers), animation activities, story-composer activities, etc.

[1036] Users of hand-held electronic toy 100 will interact with the wide range of activities in a variety of ways. For example, compare the differences in interaction that would be used in a free-drawing activity and in a concentration-game activity. In the free-drawing activity, all of the tools that are associated with icons 201-209 on toolbar menu 112 can be utilized. The user would be permitted to use the pencil tool, the straight-line tool, the shapes tool, the stamper tool, the eraser tool, the full-screen-erase tool, the special-effects tool, and the save tool in creating a drawing image. In the concentration-game activity, on the other hand, those drawing tools would be unnecessary. Interaction with the concentration game would be limited to the selection of tiles or cards to identify matching tiles or cards. Thus, in this activity, the tools associated with icons 201-208 on toolbar menu 112 would be inactivated. If the user selects one of icons 201-208 using stylus 120, an error tone would be played by hand-held electronic toy 100 signaling the selection of an inactivated tool. As would be appreciated, in various other activities, all or part of the set of tools associated with icons 201-208 can be inactivated for the activity that has been selected by the user.

[1037] The differences in interaction with particular activities can also be evident in the selectable options that are provided for a tool that is being used for the selected activity. For example, compare the difference in the selectable options that are provided for a stamper tool when used in a free-drawing activity and when used in a funny-faces activity. In a free-drawing activity, the user begins with a blank drawing screen. Selection of icon 204 would call up a pop-up menu box that offers the user a stamper selection set. In one embodiment,

this stamper selection set would include stamps of general interest, such as animal stamps, sporting object stamps, etc. In the funny-faces activity, on the other hand, a pop-up menu box would offer the user a stamper selection set that would include face-related stamps such as eye, nose, ears, and moustache stamps.

[1038] The difference in the selectable options presented in the pop-up menu box represents one example of a characteristic of a tool that can be modified for a particular activity. In general, it is envisioned that any characteristic that governs some aspect of usability for the tool can be modified based on the particular activity that has been selected by the user.

[1039] As described, characteristics of tools associated with icons 201-209 can be modified based on an identity of the activity that has been selected. It should also be noted that characteristics of tools associated with icons 201-209 can also be modified based on a state of interaction with a particular activity. For example, consider the types of interaction that can be used in a scene-starter activity. As noted, the scene-starter activity allows the user to select from several starter scenes. For example, starter scenes such as beach or space starter scenes can be selected through the use of browser arrow buttons that enable scrolling through the set of available starter scenes.

[1040] Tools associated with icons 201-209 can be modified based on the starter scene that is currently displayed. For example, the stamper tool associated with icon 204 can be modified based on whether a beach-starter scene or a space-starter scene is displayed. If the beach-starter scene is selected, then selection of icon 204 would present a pop-up menu box